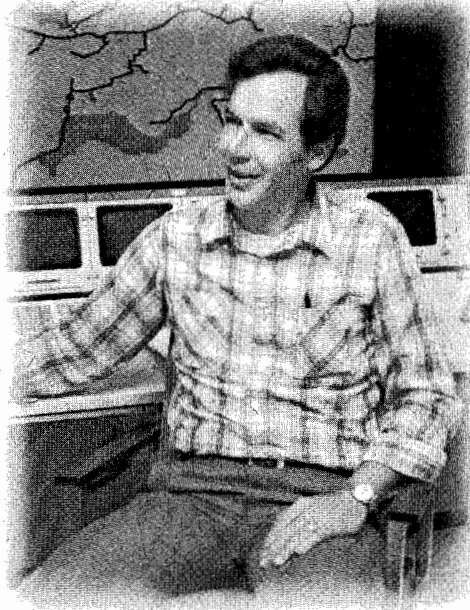


Chapter Three



Challenges, triumphs and consolidation

Using a computer-controlled system, Bill Nitz monitors wastewater flow in Metro's sewerage system.



Deep in concentration, Dan Sturgill takes sediment samples from Alki Beach in West Seattle.



Ned Ahrens Photo



Seattle Times Photo

Gary Isaac administers a dye test as part of a water quality study in January 1964. Isaac later became superintendent of operations and maintenance for the Water Pollution Control Department.

Pipeline project stirs controversy

In the 1960s, when Metro built its secondary treatment plant at Renton, anglers worried about how discharges from the new plant would affect fish in the Duwamish River. Metro promised the state that if the effluent became a problem it would be diverted to Puget Sound.

In 1980, as the volume of effluent was growing and the accumulation of ammonia and chlorine in the river became stronger, Metro agreed it was time to go.

Engineers considered several alternatives, including a pipeline to Alki Point and a tunnel to Point Pully on the Puget Sound shoreline in the Seahurst area. The tunnel was significantly cheaper—\$279 million versus an estimated \$357 million for the Alki pipeline. Metro chose the 6.2-mile-long tunnel. It would be 10 feet in diameter.

Residents of south King County erupted in anger. In July 1981, however, Executive Director Neil Peterson recommended a \$531 million plan that included the Seahurst tunnel, as it became known, and expansion of the East Division Reclamation Plant at Renton.

The tunnel project failed both technically and politically. About 500 people attended a public meeting in August

1981 to protest the project. The route of the proposed tunnel was uncertain geologically and scientists learned that effluent from the outfall would circulate around Vashon Island, rather than be flushed out to sea.

Facing a 1986 deadline for completion of the so-called effluent transfer system, the Metro Council early in 1983 abandoned the Seahurst tunnel idea and ordered the construction of an 11-mile pipeline under the Duwamish River and along West Marginal Way South and Harbor Avenue Southwest to a deep-water outfall off Duwamish Head. Refined engineering estimates were \$202 million for the Duwamish pipeline and \$179 million for Seahurst.

The effluent transfer system, which includes a pump station, force mains, tunnel and outfall, was finished in March 1987—a few months late but still ahead of the fish runs in the river. The project, which presented significant design and engineering challenges, illustrates Metro's ability to get the job done. With the east division plant's effluent diverted to Puget Sound, the Duwamish River saw marked improvement. Ammonia nearly disappeared from the river and oxygen levels improved significantly.

Metro Milestone

June, 1980

**C. Carey
Donworth retires
as Metro Council
chairman and is
succeeded by
Gary
Zimmerman.**

Metro Milestone

Nov. 4, 1980

King County voters narrowly approve increasing the transit sales tax to six tenths of one percent. New revenue will support added service and help pay for future capital programs.

Debate over secondary treatment

Metro's sewage treatment plants at West Point, Carkeek Park and Alki were all built to provide primary treatment of wastewater. Primary treatment removes about half the solids in the waste stream through skimming and settling, followed by chlorination of the effluent. Secondary treatment removes up to 95 percent of the solids in the influent through a more complex process and chlorinates the nearly clean liquid discharged through the outfall.

Metro made the decision to provide only primary treatment at these marine plants based on the best scientific information available. Metro engineers and public officials reasoned that it just didn't make sense to spend more money on secondary facilities.

The secondary-treatment issue lay dormant until passage of the Clean Water Act of 1972. The act required secondary treatment at all wastewater plants in the United States.

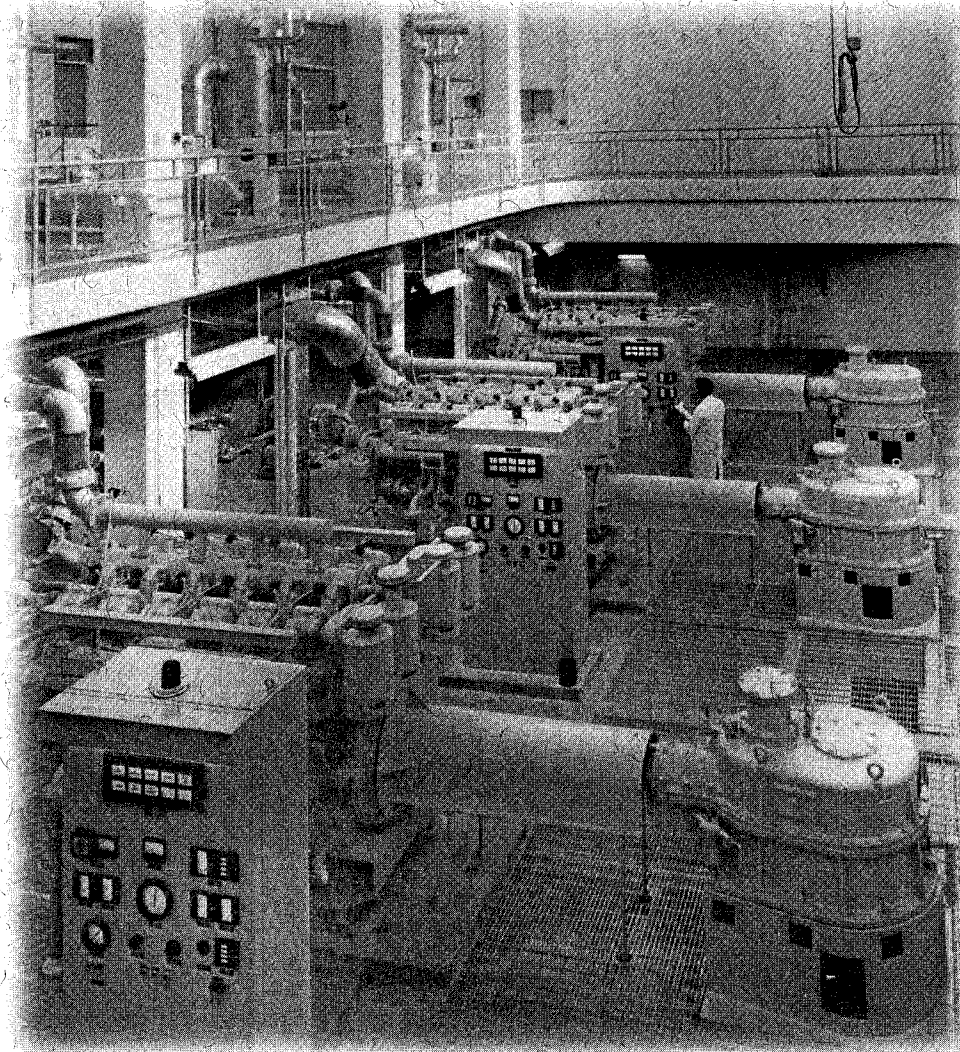
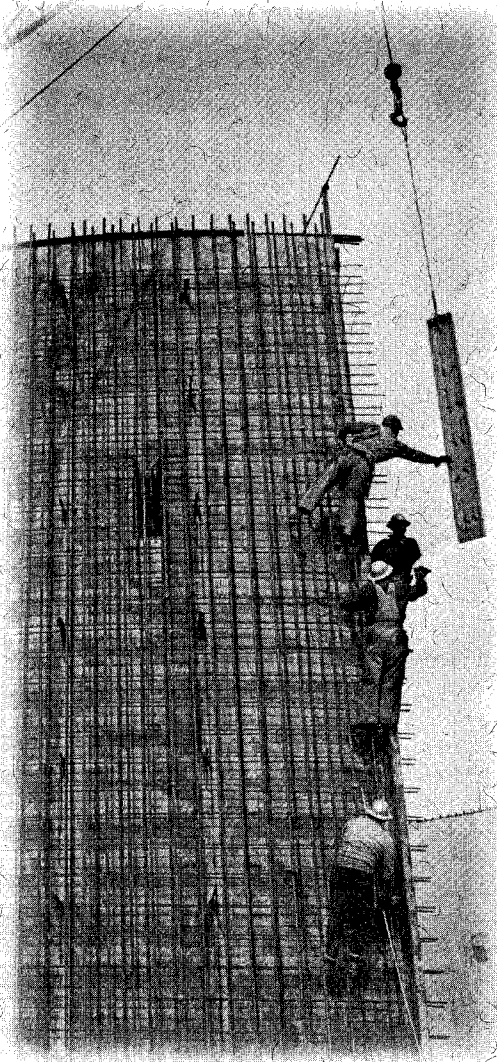
Metro, working with a group it helped form, the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies, persuaded Congress to amend the Clean Water Act in 1977 to waive secondary treatment at plants that could prove that discharge of primary effluent was not harmful.

Metro struggled with the waiver issue and proposed other treatment processes that would meet federal requirements of providing "the best available treatment of wastewater to make all waterways fishable and swimmable." Engineering studies conducted at the time indicated secondary treatment would cost up to \$240 million at West Point and increase the sewer rate by several dollars a month.

"It really wasn't important to this community (at that time) to spend money on secondary treatment," Metro Executive Director Tom Gibbs said shortly after he left Metro in 1974.

In the coming decade, scientists conducted further studies of Puget Sound to determine if secondary treatment would be beneficial. The research found increasing levels of toxic materials in the waste stream and in marine life, mostly heavy metals such as copper, zinc and lead. The studies concluded that secondary treatment, along with pretreatment of industrial waste before discharge to sewers, would reduce the level of toxins in Puget Sound.

Workers erect a digester tank at the West Point Treatment Plant as part of a \$573.5 million construction project to upgrade the facility to provide secondary treatment of wastewater. Construction work began in May 1991 and was completed, except for landscaping, in 1995.



A technician checks to ensure the sewer pumps at the West Point Treatment Plant are operating properly. The plant opened in 1966 with a treatment capacity of 125 million gallons per day.

Showdown on secondary treatment

Aug. 9, 1984. It was a nice summer day and the Metro Council's Water Quality Committee was conducting a workshop in an unusual place, the University of Washington waterfront activities center on Union Bay. It was a pleasant setting, with large, old trees and green lawn sloping to Lake Washington.

The committee's topic was the number one ongoing subject at Metro: future levels of sewage treatment. The Environmental Protection Agency tentatively had agreed to issue a secondary-treatment waiver for Metro's West Point Treatment Plant and had asked the state Department of Ecology for concurrence. Ecology supported the secondary-treatment requirement and had directed smaller communities to comply.

Congress had supported waivers for ocean dischargers but in less than a week it switched position and said it wanted secondary treatment nationally and would pay 75 percent of the cost.

As the elected members of the Water Quality Committee gathered on the UW campus, it was clear the tide had

turned. At the workshop, the councilmembers learned that water-quality studies had shown the presence of toxins in the outfall near the West Point Treatment Plant.

Additionally, councilmembers were told that other studies had changed scientists' views of how Puget Sound was flushed. The common belief had been that Puget Sound poured directly into the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Pacific Ocean. New research showed that sills in the bottom of the sound contained its water, causing it to slosh back and forth. Instead of being flushed directly to sea, pollutants were retained within Puget Sound and worked out into the strait slowly.

At noon, workshop attendees carried brown-bag lunches outside. Gathering at one spot on the lawn were Executive Director Alan Gibbs, who had moved to Metro from the state Department of Social and Health Services in late 1983; John Spencer, who had resigned recently as deputy director of Ecology to become director of Metro's Water Pollution Control Department; and Ernesta Barnes, a former Metro staffer now working as regional administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

"Gibbs said he was sure the Metro Council would go for secondary treatment," Spencer recalled of the lunch-hour gathering. "Within 24 hours, Ernesta and Don Moos (director of Ecology) announced that the feds had withdrawn (the waiver) and that the state had withdrawn its concurrence.

"The thing that turned out to be the clincher," Spencer said, "was that secondary treatment was effective on toxics."

"That's where the body shifted position," Metro Council Chairman Gary Zimmerman would say later of the workshop. "But the handwriting was on the wall."

In her announcement of withdrawal of the waiver, Barnes said: "Too many bottom fish are showing signs of disease. Too many oyster and clam beds are closed to harvesting. Too many people are wondering if it is safe to sail or swim in Puget Sound."

A few days later, Gibbs recommended the Metro Council not appeal the EPA/Ecology decision to withdraw the waiver. Metro should plan on building secondary-treatment systems and should seek federal and state money to help pay for them.

"My own personal view is that the time for arguing and debating is behind us," Gibbs told the council. "We need to move on."

The arguments had been fierce, however, and would continue with some engineers and scientists arguing money could better be spent on cleaning up storm drainage and reducing or eliminating the discharge of toxins into sewers.

Metro Milestone

Nov. 4, 1983

The Metro Council approves a downtown Seattle bus tunnel served by dual-power buses to end a deadlock with the city over downtown transit service. Alan Gibbs becomes executive director.

Metro Milestone

July 18, 1986

Metro Council votes 19 to 16 to provide secondary treatment at West Point following a federal decision to deny Metro a waiver of the secondary requirement. The new plant is to be "on line" before end of 1995.

Siting issue draws citizen ire

One fierce debate over, it was time for another: Where should Metro build federally required secondary-treatment systems?

West Point was an obvious choice because a primary-treatment plant had operated there since 1966. The city was plumbed so that wastewater flowed to the point, the result of engineering work by R.H. Thomson, city engineer in the early 1900s.

It was an argument similar to those heard in 1962 when Metro chose West Point for its largest new treatment plant. But one thing had changed. In 1962, Metro's neighbor on the bluff above the point was the Army, operating out of Fort Lawton, and the uplands and the sandy spit below were closed to the public.

By 1984, however, Fort Lawton had become Discovery Park. Its acres of grass and trees, and the sweeping views of Puget Sound, were transferred to the city after the military decided it no longer needed the fort. Park visitors could walk down the steep hill and trudge along the beach in front of the treatment plant.

So, as engineers suggested expansion of the treatment plant at the point, the city, park lovers and environmentalists were screaming "No, no, no!"

Some people thought the primary plant should be torn down and the beach restored to natural conditions. Mayor Charles Royer said an enlarged West Point Treatment Plant would be as damaging to the city as construction of Interstate 5.

Hundreds of individuals would fight Metro. Scores would attend Metro Council meetings and hearings to protest any plans to expand the West Point plant. Community organizations worked together to thwart Metro.

Day after day, year after year, Bob Kildall was among the most consistent and the most persistent in working for Discovery Park and in dreaming for the day when West Point would again just be a sandy spit with tidal ponds, beach grasses and walking paths through the old plant site. He formed organizations and created alliances, raised funds and wrote letters to newspapers and never gave up.

Despite his frustration with Metro, Kildall doesn't discredit the agency.

"If you compare Seattle to other cities, Metro is an excellent example of citizens at work and of a successful approach, at that time, to successful water quality," Kildall said. "It was a

popular citizen movement ... Metro wouldn't have made it, except it was a citizens' effort."

Citizens supporting Discovery Park and opposing expansion of the treatment plant were just as civic minded, he said. "We had two good groups of people colliding."

*A bird's-eye view
of the West Point
Treatment Plant
in June 1976
before conversion
to secondary
treatment.*



Seattle Times Photo

Council settles secondary-siting issue

July 17, 1986. The Metro Council met in a large auditorium in the Plymouth Congregational Church in downtown Seattle. Councilmembers sat at tables pushed together in a large U, with key staff members nearby. The audience perched on folding chairs crowded along the walls.

Chairman Gary Zimmerman called the meeting to order early in the afternoon. The summer sun would set before it adjourned.

"I have a higher level of ambiguity than most, and it is easy for me to let everyone be heard," he said later. "I would always try to get both sides on the record, to let them feel they were heard. So, the meeting was long."

Executive Director Alan Gibbs already had recommended rejection of two other proposed treatment-plant sites—at Interbay and in the Duwamish industrial area—and had proposed that Metro's major secondary system be installed at West Point. That was the least-costly alternative, Gibbs said.

His long-range plan also included secondary treatment at the existing Alki and Richmond Beach treatment plants and a major reduction in combined-sewer overflows. The estimated cost was \$1.3 billion, with nearly \$600 million of that total for improvements at West Point.

The audience was fidgety and hot as the afternoon wore on, but its attention never flagged.

After an emotional debate on a procedural issue, the council finally voted 18 to 17 to abandon a Duwamish plant as an alternative, even though the council's Water Quality Committee had endorsed the Duwamish plant. That moved the council into a debate over expansion at West Point.

When Zimmerman figured everyone had been heard, the council voted 19 to 16 to approve putting secondary-treatment systems at West Point. Zimmerman voted for the Duwamish project but later cast his vote for the West Point alternative on the last ballot of the evening, giving expansion of the existing plant a wider winning edge.

Mayor Charles Royer and six Seattle City councilmembers voted for the Duwamish proposal. (Councilmember Norm Rice voted to expand West Point; two other members were absent.) They were supported by Bellevue and Kent and some King County Council representatives. But votes from other county councilmembers and suburban cities and sewer districts, whose representatives made it clear they didn't want to pay extra to give Seattle a park, made a winner of the West Point expansion proposal.

Royer campaigned hard for the Duwamish proposal. His persuasion worked, with County Executive Tim Hill and the Bellevue City Council agreeing to support his position.

"A few months ago, we had only a handful of votes," Royer said after the council vote. "I'm disappointed. But we were out-muscled by the numbers—not on the merits."

In 1995, Royer said: "It was a democratic decision. The debate was all about money. But when you ratcheted it over the long haul I don't think money was necessarily the issue."

The city's opposition presented a grave danger for Metro. It needed a shoreline permit from Seattle to build on the beach at West Point. The city could deny the permit, leaving Metro with no alternative plan and facing state and court penalties for missing deadlines.

Metro submitted its application to Seattle in December 1986. Seattle's Department of Construction and Land Use recommended denying the permit in July 1987. A hearings examiner, ruling in November, opposed issuing a shoreline permit.

In early 1988, however, the Seattle City Council voted 6 to 3 to award a shoreline permit to Metro. After reviewing social, economic and environmental considerations, it accepted the principal argument for expanding West Point: There was no feasible alternative.

Opponents appealed the decision to the state Shoreline Hearings Board. After long hearings and debate, the board voted 3 to 3 on granting the appeal. It would not overturn the Seattle permit.

Metro Milestone

March 6, 1987

**Boring of the
downtown transit
tunnel begins.**

Metro Milestone

Nov. 8, 1988

King County voters urge acceleration of rail transit planning in an advisory ballot. Metro begins work, then a three-county Joint Regional Policy Committee is formed to guide transit planning and, finally, a Regional Transit Authority assumes control.

Source-control programs evolve

Converting primary treatment plants to secondary treatment was just part of Metro's water quality program outlined by Executive Director Alan Gibbs. The program included efforts to strengthen the agency's industrial-pretreatment programs to reduce toxic discharges and to begin a community-education program on the dangers of toxic compounds.

Through its industrial-waste program, Metro monitors and regulates the discharge of pollutants into the sewerage system. Metro issues permits limiting the discharge of chemicals and it can levy fines. The goal is to protect the treatment process, but another major result has been the reduction in the use and discharge of harmful chemicals and a cleaner effluent and biosolids produced by treatment plants. Dangerous waste materials now are recycled by industry or shipped away for proper disposal.

"We are not just a regulator, but we work with industry to accommodate as much waste as we can that the treatment plant is designed to treat," said Doug Hildebrand, industrial-waste-program officer. "Industry has been cooperative, and pretreatment efforts have been successful. Metro has not had to act as a police force."

Another way Metro controls what enters the wastewater system is through the hazardous-waste-management program. In years past, citizens had no place to take hazardous household trash. To address the problem, Metro joined Seattle, King County, the Seattle-King County Health



Katherine Jones/Seattle Times Photo

Dave Galvin checks common household products for hazardous ingredients in 1989. Through educational and recycling programs, Metro helped keep toxic chemicals out of the wastewater system.

Department, the Metrocenter YMCA and other groups in planning household hazardous-waste roundups. Consumers were invited to bring toxic trash out of their basements and garages to the weekend events in the late 1980s.

Concerned citizens, who had been stockpiling old paint, used motor oil, dribs and drabs of insecticides and pesticides, rushed to unload. The roundups got a lot of DDT, a pesticide banned in the 1970s. They attracted materials up to 50 years old, such as lead arsenate and white lead paint. It was estimated that 4,000 households hauled material to the roundups, disposing of 117 tons of waste that included 5,000 gallons of oil and 220 car batteries.

"We were overwhelmed," said Dave Galvin, who manages the hazardous-waste program. "Each roundup drew 1,000 cars or more and tons of stuff. It wasn't the long-range answer."

The answer was the opening of two permanent household hazardous-waste-disposal sites in Seattle and the creation of a wastemobile that serves the rest of King County on a regular schedule. Manufacturers have responded, too, with less toxic products or with substitutes that pose fewer environmental threats.

"This illustrates Metro's willingness to take a leadership position when it could have said we'll just treat the stuff

that's in the pipe," Galvin said. "But the reason for the program's success is that it is regional in nature, all governments are participating."

Through the efforts of both the household hazardous-waste and industrial-pretreatment programs, "we've seen the quality of wastewater improve dramatically at the source," Galvin said.

The success of the two programs reflects what Galvin calls Metro's "can do" attitude, which promotes reasonable risk taking. "That 'can do' attitude is important," he said. "When a job appears the response is—how can we do it?"



Ned Ahrens Photo

Industrial-waste specialist Cathy Foss descends into a manhole during an on-site inspection in April 1987. Through the industrial-waste program, Water Pollution Control employees monitor and regulate the discharge of pollutants into the sewerage system.

John Lesniak: Common sense and commitment

A young man, John Lesniak, was superintendent of the West Point project. He helped plan the work and later would manage construction. Lesniak studied Metro as a student at the University of North Carolina. With degrees in geology and regional planning, he moved to Seattle and went to work for the agency in March 1979 as an assistant water-quality planner.

The Magnolia community offered some of the stiffest opposition to expansion of the West Point plant. Residents feared the impact of five or six years of construction and the trucks carrying treated wastewater solids that would rumble to and from the plant long after work was complete.

Lesniak helped negotiate an agreement with the community that would ease its concerns and aided in drafting a court ruling that established deadlines and construction schedules requiring that the secondary-treatment system be in operation by Dec. 31, 1995.

Under that agreement, construction workers were bused to and from the job site and construction materials arrived in barges that unloaded at a temporary pier, reducing the number of heavy trucks crossing Discovery Park to reach the plant site. Metro provided \$30 million for the development of other shoreline beaches in the area and gave the Magnolia community \$2 million.



Nad Ahrens Photo

In addition, plant design minimized the impact of the structure on users of Discovery Park, with Metro spending nearly \$70 million just to cover, screen and in other ways diminish the plant's appearance. The site is bordered with man-made mini-hills called berms, and tens of thousands of native trees and shrubs will be planted on those berms.

Lesniak was proof the Metro ethic lived on in a younger generation of workers at Metro. He worked long hours to do his best for Metro and the community.

"He was absolutely pivotal to West Point," said Executive Director Dick Sandaas. "He was technically bright, he had a sensitivity for community concerns—and good common sense, too."

Mark Bloom, chairman of Heart of America, an early critic of treatment-plant expansion, said: "Because of John and his honesty, the West Point settlement was made for the benefit of the entire community."

A few days after Christmas in 1992, John Lesniak died of cancer. He was 38.

Biosolids: controversy and success

Metro's efforts to recycle biosolids, the nutrient-rich material that remains after the sewage-treatment process, has earned the agency international acclaim. Those efforts have also stirred controversy.

Since 1972, Metro has been committed to recycling biosolids, rather than burn it or take it to a landfill as do some other sewerage agencies. Some biosolids are sold to private companies that compost the material with sawdust to create a soil amendment popular with commercial and home gardeners. Other biosolids are used in special projects to enrich infertile soil. Successful projects have included sites in Seattle's Gasworks Park, Myrtle Edwards Park and Discovery Park.

Seeking other uses of biosolids, Metro contracted with the University of Washington to test use of the treatment-plant residue on trees at the university's Pack Forest. It also signed an agreement to deliver biosolids to a strip coal mine near Centralia for use in land restoration.

Expanding on the successful silviculture concept, Metro spread biosolids on land owned by the Weyerhaeuser Co. and other forest-products companies. And it bought its own forests to guarantee it would have sufficient property for

recycling biosolids. That's when Metro ran into community opposition.

One tract acquired by Metro was near Yelm, in Thurston County, on a bluff above the Nisqually River. Living nearby were actress Linda Evans, reputed channeler J.Z. Knight and hundreds of others who scolded Metro for what they thought was a dangerous idea. A second tract Metro purchased was at Cumberland in southeast King County. Living on the edge of that forest was Valerie Cunningham, a woman who feared biosolids and led a challenge to Metro's plans to spread it on her doorstep. (In 1989, she would lend her name to the court case that would consolidate Metro with King County.)

The Yelm opponents delivered hundreds of people in fleets of buses to Metro Council meetings in 1989 to fight the biosolids-recycling plan. Evans came to at least one, but stood inconspicuously and quietly in the crowd and answered reporters' questions politely.

The council chamber in the Pacific Building was jammed with critics, and the protesters from Thurston County spilled out into the elevator lobby, while some held signs on the street. Their protest was well planned: Speakers painted

Metro Milestone

Sept. 7, 1989

**Richard Sandaas
is appointed
executive
director.**

Metro Milestone

Oct. 29, 1989

American civil
Liberties Union
files federal suit
challenging
constitutionality
of the Metro
Council. Four
area citizens offer
their names as
plaintiffs.

verbal pictures of environmental destruction and public health hazards if Metro biosolids were ever spread in that forest. They ignored the 1988 Environmental Protection Agency finding that Metro biosolids met federal standards for soil enrichment and that the Metro recycling program was the nation's most outstanding.

It was obvious Metro would never truck biosolids to its Yelm property. Eventually Metro sold the Yelm site and it was logged by its new owner.

Metro faced another setback during the Yelm controversy. The new owner of the Centralia coal mine abruptly canceled its contract for Metro biosolids. Fortunately, one of agency's good biosolids customers, a composting firm, agreed to take extra truckloads.

After those difficulties, Metro worked hard on a strategy that emphasized the recycling value of biosolids. And thanks to the industrial-pretreatment and hazardous-waste-education programs, the amount of metals and pathogens in biosolids was reduced so significantly the federal government approved its use for agricultural crops.

Metro also worked with the Northwest Biosolids Management Association and the national Water Environment Federation to provide information to the public about biosolids recycling.

Because of these efforts, by 1995 Metro was over the hump and its biosolids enjoyed public acceptance. Biosolids continue to be used for gardening compost and on Western Washington forests. A big market is in Eastern Washington where knowledgeable dryland wheat farmers and hop ranchers will take all the biosolids available.

"What could be better," said Pete Machno, biosolids program manager. "We have come from an end-of-the-world scenario to having the most enviable biosolids-recycling program in the world."



Richard Heyza/Seattle Times Photo

A tanker truck sprays treated wastewater solids on trees at a Pack Forest research site near Eatonville. In later years, Metro refined its biosolids-recycling techniques.

Moving into the 1990s

By 1980, the transit sales tax of three tenths of one percent, which had seemed so generous when voters approved it in 1973, no longer could do the job. The 1970s had brought the nation some of its worst inflation just as Metro was building bus shelters and bus bases, rebuilding its trolley bus system and buying diesel and electric coaches.

A new plan, one that would carry Metro Transit to 1990, required additional funding if ridership goals were to be met and key projects completed. Metro planners in 1980 envisioned an enormous increase in ridership to 138 million passengers by 1990 and a near-tripling of the bus fleet to 2,300 buses and 1,800 vanpool vehicles.

A stagnant economy, reductions in federal aid, relatively cheap gasoline and static patronage totals meant those ambitious projections would not be achieved by the 1990s. (In 1995, Metro carried about 75 million riders and had 1,150 buses.)

Metro asked voters in September 1980 to approve increasing transit's share of the sales tax to six tenths of one percent, which would give transit an additional \$500

million over the coming decade. The measure was defeated, gaining only a 47 percent favorable margin. Undeterred, Metro officials asked Penny Peabody, who had recently left the agency after serving as acting executive director, to lead the effort to win voter approval in the November general election. Working with her was former Renton Mayor Charles Delaurenti.

Learning there was a meager budget from citizen contributions, Peabody agreed to do her work as a volunteer and to aim the few available dollars at getting the message to voters.

The Peabody-Delaurenti team succeeded. The new tax was approved in the November general election, receiving a 51 percent favorable majority. Although



Community relations planner Patty Waller, left, talks with Velva Maye, a member of the Northgate Transit Center Design Review Committee. Early citizen involvement played an important role in developing the facility.

the grand plan for the 1980s never was realized, the new tax base funded many other improvements over the decade and, because a share of it was reserved for capital projects, enabled Metro to finance the \$483 million downtown bus tunnel at the end of the decade.

Metro's steady source of funding is one reason why the agency has achieved its success. In addition to the six tenths of one percent of King County sales tax, transit receives a 2 percent share of the motor vehicle excise tax. Riders through pass sales and the farebox contribute about 25 percent of transit operating costs. State and federal grants provide the balance of Metro's transit operating and capital costs.

Planner Andrea Tull shovels dirt over a time capsule during opening ceremonies for the Bellevue Transit Center in September 1985. The center was the first in a series of regional facilities designed to make it easier for bus riders to transfer between routes.



Ned Ahrens Photo

Tunnel project dominates decade

In 1980 a pedestrian with decent legs and lungs could outpace a Metro Transit bus on downtown Seattle streets during the evening rush hour.

With more than 500 coaches downtown during the peak hour of the day and with thousands of cars and trucks competing for street space, traffic slowed to a crawl.

Transit planners envisioned huge increases in patronage and a doubling of the transit fleet by the 1990s, posing the threat of worsening congestion downtown.

Neil Peterson, a state Department of Social and Health Services administrator who succeeded Dick Page as Metro executive director in 1977, reported that about 30 percent of transit operating costs were incurred just in moving buses through downtown Seattle. Riders spent about 30 percent of their commute travel time creeping through the central city.

Peterson, a bold and controversial executive director, hammered at his transit-planning staff to produce something exciting.

"In reviewing the long-range transit plan I remember being singularly unexcited," he would recall later. "There was nothing that would capture the public's imagination. What set Metro apart was that Metro always was on the leading edge with new and alternative methods. There wasn't anything in it."

One idea was to build major bus terminals just north and south of the central-business district. Express buses would drop commuters at the terminals where they would board electric circulator coaches that would take them to their offices and stores in the central-business district. Third Avenue could become an attractive transit mall.

Initially, Mayor Charles Royer was the leading proponent of the terminal proposal. "I thought that we could get more transit miles for the buck with a circulator system," he remembered later.

Peterson opposed the terminal plan. "We felt strongly that those transfers were the last thing. We got into a real tug of war, it was pretty brutal."

Although Peterson played a major role in water-quality issues—including maintaining Metro's campaign for a

Metro Milestone

June 21, 1990

**Penny Peabody
runs against and
defeats Gary
Zimmerman for
chair of the
Metro Council.**

Metro Milestone

Sept. 6, 1990

U. S. District Judge William Dwyer rules composition of the Metro Council unconstitutional in the American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit. Elected officials step up their search for agreement on a new form of regional government.

waiver of secondary-treatment requirements, developing a salmon-planting program in regional streams and focusing on Duwamish River pollution problems—he probably will be best remembered for his final hoorah: the downtown Seattle bus tunnel.

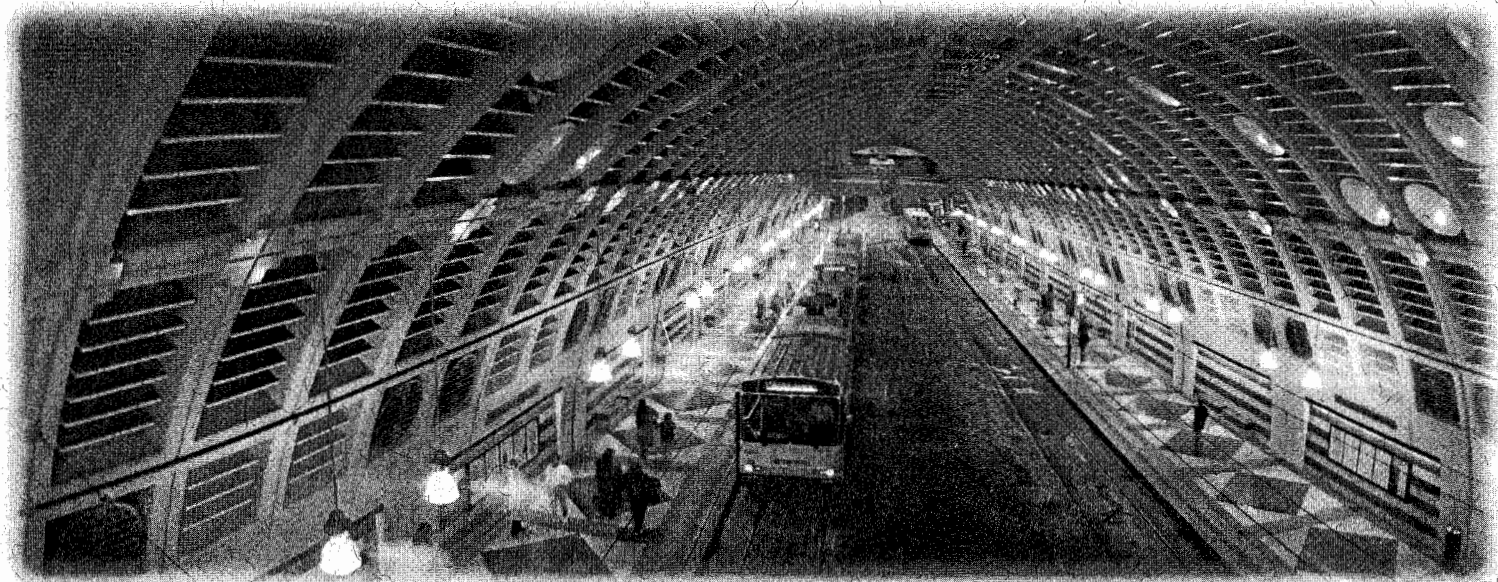
When Peterson resigned in late 1983 to marry Tracy Duiker, Metro finance director, the Metro Council deliberately sought a nonpolitical administrator, one who would serve more as a city manager and not as a political adventurer.

"I felt strongly they were paying me for options and for recommendations and, man, I gave them

recommendations. I wasn't shy about it," Peterson would recall.

To break a deadlock with the city over the downtown project, Peterson—now a lame duck after announcing resignation plans—proposed construction of a tunnel and the use of dual-power articulated buses that would use electric motors in the tunnel and diesel engines on surface streets. He offered Metro funds to make major improvements on Third Avenue.

"I remember the presentation so well," Peterson said. "The councilmembers were so relieved we had a compromise



Served by five passenger stations, including one near Pioneer Square, the downtown Seattle transit tunnel provides a friendly environment for bus riders.

they could buy into. The proposal was such an olive branch that it allowed Seattle to say yes."

The council approved his proposal in November 1983 to end five years of debate.

By this time, Royer had become a supporter of the tunnel proposal.

"I was on all three sides," he would say later. "I was for it, against it and I was neutral. Initially, I thought that it would be a major investment without a lot of return. Ultimately I was convinced it was right, and I am today convinced. I was persuaded by Jim Ellis, who said we would need the tunnel for rail service. He said downtown would be the most expensive mile of rail and why not do it now?"

Planning and design of the ambitious "Downtown Seattle Transit Project" were managed by L. Joe Miller and later by David Kalberer. Vladimir Khazak served as project engineer. The tunnel is 1.3 miles long and runs from Union Station under Third Avenue and Pine Street to Ninth Avenue. Designed to accommodate future conversion to light trains, the tunnel is served by five underground stations that provide access to nearby stores and office buildings.

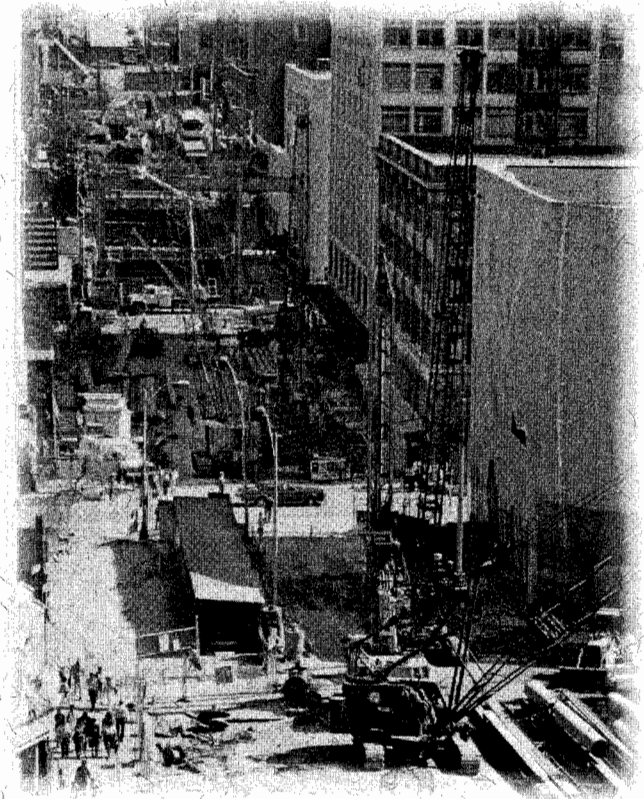
Engineers working on the project were challenged by the need to cross under, and then over, the Burlington Northern railway tunnel. Using lasers and careful

measurements, they safely made the crossings and negotiated the right turn from Third Avenue into Pine Street.

Although the tunnel was bored, the five stations required cut-and-cover construction. Pine Street was closed to traffic and Third Avenue offered motorists and pedestrians a new detour every day. Making life worse downtown was the simultaneous construction of several major office buildings.

A team of artists was hired to create art for the tunnel, working with a \$1.5 million budget. Works selected included huge murals in the Westlake Station, high-tech electronic art in the University Street Station and small tiles decorated by school children at the International District Station. Art also was part of the architecture of the tunnel. Metro earned rave reviews in national publications for its design and for the use of art.

The first bus drove through the tunnel March 15, 1989, to demolish a rumor that a bus couldn't make the turn



Ned Ahrens Photo

Pine Street was closed to traffic during construction of the bus tunnel in downtown Seattle.

Simultaneous construction of several major office buildings added to the confusion.



Mighty Mole, played by long-time Metro employee Mary Peterson, leads the celebration during kickoff of the Downtown Seattle Transit Project as Metro employees and invited guests look on.

new 60-foot dual-power coaches through the tunnel successfully.

It wasn't a speedy trip. Dips and bumps slowed Laritz and he had to steer cautiously over some temporary steel and plank decking.

Kalberer made three trips through the tunnel on a bus. "I'm having a good time," he told reporters. "But this is a great day for the people who designed it ... and for all the people who have done a good job. It's their victory."

Metro reopened Pine Street to traffic a year ahead of schedule, and the tunnel itself went into operation Sept. 15, 1990, as promised. The tunnel was completed months ahead of opening to give Paul Toliver, transit director, and his staff time to train drivers and supervisors and to learn how to operate it.

from Third Avenue into Pine Street. Jim Patrick, a Metro administrator and former bus driver, took a 40-foot coach through the tunnel first. Then Bruno Laritz, an instructor, took the first of the

The tunnel's final cost was \$483 million, significantly more than the original estimate of \$415 million, because of inflation and unexpected problems encountered in the boring of the tunnel.

The tunnel was not built without controversy, however. In late 1988 and in early 1989, the agency was rocked by charges that it had purchased granite from South Africa for use in the downtown bus tunnel despite a Metro Council policy prohibiting buying materials manufactured or produced there. Metro adopted the policy, as did other government agencies, to protest the formal discrimination practiced in South Africa.

It became a heated and emotional issue involving members of Seattle's minority communities. Metro Councilmember Ron Sims, an African American, called for the firing of involved employees. Executive Director Alan Gibbs finally resigned to clear the air, even though he had not been involved in the decision to buy the South African stone.

In March 1989, the Metro Council Rules Committee determined there had been no staff cover-up and said there was no need for further discipline. "The committee said it found no evidence the Metro staff tried 'to avoid or undermine' the council's 1987 policy banning the use of products manufactured in South Africa," The Seattle Times reported. The tarnish remained, however.

Complaints spawn cultural change

In late 1989, the newspaper headlines shouted: "Metro Racist." Minorities and women working at Metro nodded in agreement, but others were bewildered. How could this be? Metro believed in affirmative action, hired minorities and women in all departments and was among the first public agencies to hire contracting firms owned by women and minorities.

In November 1989, Metro Councilmember Charles DeChabert reported to the council on a study he had completed. It showed, DeChabert said, that minority employees were disciplined and discharged disproportionately throughout the agency. Alarmed by his report, the council's Finance and Personnel Committee approved creation of a task force that would conduct a detailed study of the problem.

DeChabert was named chair of the task force. Metro Councilmember Jean Carpenter would serve, along with employees from all Metro divisions and representatives of two major unions, Local 587 of the Amalgamated Transit Union and Local 6 of Service Employees International Union. The task force affirmed and documented equity problems at Metro.

In its final report, the DeChabert task force held nothing back. "Metro has, over time, created a culture that practices or facilitates disparate treatment of women and minorities in all departments," it said.

"Acts of discrimination among union members occur frequently throughout the agency. Victims are often alienated in the workplace and are labeled a problem when reporting an incident. They may be threatened physically or with the loss of their jobs if they continue to complain," the task force report said.

"The task force and (its) consultant were consistent in finding an overall lack of management accountability and commitment to equal-employment opportunity and affirmative-action and human-relations issues."

Managers often focus simply on the hiring of minorities and females "to achieve affirmative-action goals while failing to address equal-employment opportunity in the work environment," the task force contended.

"In contrast with the high value Metro management has placed on technical achievements, 'on time and under

Metro Milestone

Sept. 15, 1990

**Bus service
begins in the
\$483 million
downtown
Seattle transit
tunnel.**

Metro Milestone

May 1991

Construction
begins on
secondary-
treatment
facilities at West
Point.

budget,' there is little or no value placed on the effective development and management of Metro's human resources.

"The work environment created by Metro's management style, termed 'paramilitary' by some management, has fostered an attitude of separatism and autonomy, instead of unity and collaboration," the task force concluded.

In simpler terms, employees were unhappy for what they considered unfair practices related to hiring, firing and promotion. Employees also desired more participation in the decision-making process.

Responding to the DeChabert report, the Metro Council, led by council chair Penny Peabody, directed Metro management to launch a corrective effort that was of unprecedented magnitude. It involved a cultural-change process, work-redesign efforts and strategies to provide a more participatory workplace. The overall goal was to create a new way of doing business at Metro, changing the agency from one of hierarchical command and control to one in which all employees were respected and allowed to participate in making decisions.

Anita Dias, a water-quality planner, was assigned to work as coordinator of the cultural-change process. Metro was dominated by a "white male engineering attitude" that

focused on completing projects, Dias said. "But as more women and minorities joined the agency, they wanted to concentrate on workplace issues in addition to doing projects."

Executive Director Dick Sandaas acknowledged that employee complaints represented one of the biggest problems he faced as executive director. "We didn't know if it would work," he said of the cultural-change process. "But we needed to do something."

Labor issues added to Metro's problems. Management and Local 587 of the Amalgamated Transit Union were at loggerheads over a contract. Metro had gone to court to resist a union demand for arbitration of the dispute. Deciding labor-management relations had to improve, Sandaas and Peabody concluded that the union had to be a part of the cultural-change discussion. They met with Dan Linville, president of the local.

"We gave them respect, we didn't beat them up," Sandaas would recall.

A consultant, Rhonda Hilyer, a former union leader and the daughter of a former member of the ATU, introduced Metro and the union to a form of collaborative negotiations in which the parties would talk about interests instead of

taking strong positions. Called collaborative bargaining, the new approach was built around five principles of agreement: interest, trust, respect, understanding and esteem.

Collaborative bargaining, which the Water Pollution Control Department and its unions had pioneered, ended the deadlock and still is used by Metro and labor unions in handling contract negotiations.



Ned Ahrens Photo

Benefits supervisor Cynthia Mack, center, makes a point during a cultural-change meeting in October 1992. Metro held 13 employee meetings to redefine the mission, values and goals of the agency.

Employees set workplace goals

Training became an important tool of the cultural-change process. With labor unions participating, the first cultural-change meeting occurred in late June 1992. About 400 employees attended. By the time the process was over, in December 1993, Metro would schedule 13 events, and 90 percent of the agency's work force of about 4,500 employees would participate.

At that mass meeting, employees emphasized behavior that would be rewarded: commitment to service; creativity; treating others with dignity, respect, fairness and equity; assuming responsibility for individual actions; and encouraging employees to take responsible risks. Metro also would reward those who sought diverse viewpoints and opinions, who encouraged teamwork and created growth opportunities for workers.

Behavior not tolerated, employees decided, would include: a lack of responsiveness to customers; discourteous treatment of the public; the waste or misuse of public resources; stereotyping, discriminating against or harassing fellow workers or spreading hurtful or inaccurate information about others.

Employees also helped develop mission and value statements for the agency. The overall mission statement developed by employees was simple: "To provide the best possible public-transportation and water-quality services that improve the quality of life for our total community."

"We value excellence in public services," the cultural-change participants wrote. "We are committed to a workplace where all people have the opportunity to contribute to their fullest potential. We are committed to diversity and recognize that it strengthens us by bringing energy, creativity and originality.

"We value the power and effectiveness of teams to enhance participation and collaboration to achieve quality results. We want to hold ourselves accountable and be evaluated by the results we achieve and by the ways we work together to achieve them."

Cultural-change goals developed by employees included: To be recognized by the citizens of the region as an outstanding, visionary organization, responsive to changing public needs.

To be recognized by Metro employees and the community as an outstanding place to work for all people.

To achieve higher levels of excellence through creative and effective teamwork.

To have a diverse work force in an organizational environment that allows all people to achieve their full potential.

Work teams throughout Metro organized to decide how to achieve the cultural-change and participatory workplace goals. The Water Pollution Control Department was an early leader.

Department employees focused on employee empowerment, explored ways to improve efficiency and discussed ways to remove barriers that hindered teamwork. Department managers quit wearing suits and ties to work because they were viewed by other workers to impede communication. The department began a gain-sharing program where employees share the savings realized by work-improvement ideas and efforts that are implemented.

In the Finance Department, employees focused on work-redesign efforts that would cut costs, improve customer service, increase security and lead to greater employee satisfaction. Employees were encouraged to take risks, become critical thinkers and be open to greater challenges.

Ned Ahrens Photo



Good driving skills and a positive attitude helped earn Mattie Robinson the Operator of the Year award for 1993. Robinson, the first female operator to earn the honor, shared the award with co-worker Raymond Sullivan.

Work redesign achieved results. Self-managed work teams eliminated unnecessary processes and procedures. Cross-training opportunities improved employee morale. And employees took actions to cut costs and improve service.

The Transit Department made progress as well. Communication between workers and management improved, while teamwork increased. At North Base, for example, workers still meet frequently to keep the cultural-change and participatory workplace messages alive.

Have the cultural-change process and efforts to create a more participatory workplace produced long-term results?

"I think it has worked," said Dick Sandaas, who retired as the cultural-change program was ending. "It provided a change in direction for the agency. The results can be amazing when you empower the people."

Metro Milestone

Nov. 5, 1991

**Proposal to
merge King
County and
Metro fails at the
polls on a
technicality.**

Metro Milestone

July 16, 1992

**Tom Kraft elected
chair of Metro
Council,
replacing Penny
Peabody, who
resigns for health
reasons.**

Jim Patrick, a bus driver who became deputy executive director and who was involved in union negotiations and cultural change, can see benefits. "The cultural-change process did a lot on an individual basis to help people better understand how to deal with issues and conflicts in the workplace," he said. "It led to collaborative negotiations, where we talked about interests rather than positions."

Mattie Robinson, co-operator of the year for 1995, has mixed opinions about the results of cultural change. "There's been some change," she said. "They talk a little differently, they smile a little more. That sort of thing. But some people never change."

Transit Director Paul Toliver, who succeeded Ron Tober in 1988, reflected on cultural change at Metro.

"We still have problems, but we're getting better," Toliver said. "This is a place most people would give their right arm to work for, and we only take the best."

Toliver said union grievances were down from 300 in 1992 to 96 in 1994; arbitration dropped from 34 cases in 1992 to 12 in 1994 as the cultural-change philosophy took root at Metro.

By increasing diversity and by giving people an opportunity to have a say in their destiny, Metro "will become known not so much as a builder of tunnels but as a developer of people," Toliver said.

Transit employees, from left, Charlie Farrell, Donald Caswell, Charlene Broussard and Terrie Kennedy pitch in for their community during a pancake feed to support the Metro/King County charitable campaign.



Dwyer decision keys Metro, county merger

In April 1989, the nine justices of the U.S. Supreme Court sat in their chambers in Washington, D.C., and signed a decision in what would become a landmark case from New York City.

Their decision in the lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) would flash to the West Coast like a tsunami and, literally, wash Metro away.

For many years an eight-member panel called the New York Board of Estimate met to deal with budget, zoning, land-use and other citywide issues. Sitting on the board were the mayor and comptroller of New York, the president of the New York City Council and the presidents of the five New York boroughs. None was elected to the board. They became members of it simply because they were elected to other office.

The Supreme Court decided the composition of the Board of Estimate was unconstitutional because it violated the equal rights provisions of the 14th Amendment. The flaw emphasized by the court was that the boroughs were widely different in population and that citizens of the

boroughs were unequally represented on the board.

In October 1989, after being encouraged by some elected officials who thought the Metro Council was not representative, the Seattle chapter of the ACLU filed a suit against Metro that made similar charges.

Lending their names as plaintiffs were Valerie Cunningham, who lived near the site in Cumberland Metro bought for the recycling of biosolids and who fought and helped defeat that Metro project; Imogene Pugh, a south King County resident and member of a citizens' group formed to challenge Metro's plan for the proposed effluent tunnel and outfall at Seahurst; Elizabeth Springer of Tukwila, a retired King County employee; and Monica Zucker of North Seattle, an ACLU board member.

The case became known simply as "*Cunningham vs. Metro*."

The ACLU arguments mirrored those made in the Board of Estimate case. Certain cities represented on the Metro Council have "substantially disproportionately" greater voting power than do others, the initial complaint said. As an example, it said that residents of Mercer Island had five

times the voting power on the Metro Council than did residents of some unincorporated areas.

Citizens of unincorporated areas are therefore "systematically denied equal voting power," the suit charged.

In announcing the lawsuit, Kathleen Taylor, executive director of the ACLU in Seattle, said: "The principle of one person, one vote is something most everyone supports. Yet the Metro Council doesn't work that way."

The legal argument was partly over whether the Metro Council was elected or appointed. Metro attorneys argued a majority of councilmembers were appointed and, therefore, the Board of Estimate decision did not apply. ACLU attorneys argued the opposite, that a majority were elected.

On Sept. 6, 1990, U.S. District Judge William Dwyer ruled in favor of the plaintiffs.

Citing the Supreme Court decision, Dwyer said: "No person's vote may be reduced in value compared to votes of others because of where he or she happens to live."

Dwyer wrote: "There is no doubt that Metro has been a great historic achievement. Its original aim was to bring

local governments together in a federation to clean up pollution in Lake Washington. In this, Metro succeeded."

However, Dwyer added, efficiency of government and public acceptance cannot justify a denial of equal protection under the Constitution.

In a line that was widely quoted, Dwyer concluded: "That the buses run on time cannot justify a dilution of a citizen's right to vote."

The judge reminded the public that change is not always bad.

"There are always risks in change, but often worse ones in rigidity. There is no reason to believe that the vigorous government and citizens of this region will fail to make Metro a continuing success if a change in the method of selecting its council is required to meet Constitutional standards," he said.

Dwyer ruled the Metro Council was an elected body. By his count, 24 of the 42 members were elected. The remaining 18 were appointed. Because a majority are elected, the council is an elected body, he said.

Because the Metro Council exercises governmental powers, it must comply with the 14th Amendment's one person-one vote principle, Dwyer added.

"The current system of selecting Metro councilmembers results in impermissibly disproportionate representation and hence a violation of the equal-protection clause," Dwyer wrote.

In November 1990, Dwyer gave public officials a "reasonable time"—until April 3, 1992—to present to him a "fully adopted" plan to revise the method of selecting the Metro Council.

By coincidence, officials of King County and its cities met Sept. 5, the day before Dwyer published his ruling, to consider creation of some form of regional government. Called by County Councilmember Lois North, that gathering would expand into what became known as the regional governance summit.

A consensus was quickly reached by the summit: a change was needed. How to make the change occupied elected officials over the next 10 months and about 30 public meetings. At the end there was general agreement to schedule an election at which voters would be asked to approve the merger of Metro and King County, to create a new 13-member Metropolitan King County Council and to decide if the new council should be nonpartisan.

Seattle and suburban cities were wary, fearful of losing the voice they had enjoyed for more than 30 years on the Metro Council. They sought a nonpartisan county body.

But the County Council voted 5 to 4 not to put the partisanship question before voters. Councilmembers were under tremendous pressure from the political parties to maintain partisan elections, but North, among others, said the public didn't want a nonpartisan County Council.

Consequently, a majority of the Seattle City Council voted to oppose the merger plan that had been scheduled for the November general election ballot. Joining the city in dissent were suburban officials who complained they gave up an important degree of control in the new government in trade for a nonpartisan council. But when the County Council rejected the partisanship ballot proposal, suburban areas got nothing in return, city officials said.

The good-government groups, the Municipal League and the League of Women Voters, campaigned for passage of the merger proposition. The Seattle Times and Post-Intelligencer also endorsed merger. The Times said "citizens of King County deserve a voice and a vote in how the region plans for the 21st Century. (The proposition) is a powerful move in the right direction."

In the November 1991 general election, the merger plan failed on a technicality.

State law imposed a dual-majority requirement on the merger question, demanding that voters in Seattle and suburban areas separately approve the merger. The issue

Metro Milestone

Nov. 3, 1992

**Merger of Metro
and King County
approved in
second election.**

Metro Milestone

Nov. 16, 1993

**Metro Council
names its last
executive
director—Carolyn
Purnell.**

was approved by Seattle voters, but those voting outside the city rejected the proposal and it failed to pass.

The April 1992 deadline slid by with no plan approved for correction of the Metro Council's representation faults. The Legislature looked at several schemes but failed to approve any in its 1992 session.

In June, after the Legislature gave up, Dwyer used his hammer and ruled that if nothing happened by April 30, 1993, only the county executive and members of the County Council could vote in the Metro Council. Suburban members could watch and comment, but their votes would be stripped from them.

Dwyer's ruling prompted a revival of the regional summit process. By late August, the summit delegates had reached consensus on another ballot proposal. Like the earlier version, it would merge Metro and the county and create a 13-member Metropolitan King County Council. A new feature, designed to satisfy the cities' demand for 'a voice and a vote,' created three special County Council committees that would deal with transit, water quality and other regional issues. Each committee would have 12 members, with city representatives holding six of those seats. Partisanship no longer was part of the package.

While there were critics of the plan, the cities spoke for the measure. "We are standing together united in a challenge

to form a new government," said Seattle Mayor Norm Rice. "We are not here to take away from what Metro has accomplished, but to say that to meet future challenges we need a new form of government."

C. Carey Donworth, Metro Council chair from 1958 to 1980, said he would vote for the merger. "Simply, I think we need to get on with the questions of management of both Metro and the county we are dealing with," he said. "It does not serve the interest of the public to prolong debate over who does what."

And on election day, Nov. 3, 1992, voters did approve merger. Sixty-three percent of Seattle voters favored it, while 53 percent in the rest of the county gave their blessing to satisfy the dual-majority requirement.

The last meeting of the Metro Council was Dec. 16, 1993.

The council had the usual long list of routine business to deal with, but it took other appropriate and timely action, too.

Metro was created by citizens who had the energy to struggle to make their dreams for clean water and efficient public transit come true. In its closing moments the council adopted a series of special resolutions thanking them all.

West Point project meets challenges

Metro spent the next two years preparing for consolidation with King County. Leading the effort for the agency was Carolyn Purnell, the first woman and first African American to serve as Metro executive director. Purnell, who also served as one of three deputy county executives during the start-up of Executive Gary Locke's administration, kept Metro staff focused on carrying out its public transportation and water pollution control missions.

During Purnell's tenure, Metro kept the West Point secondary-treatment project on schedule and on budget. The \$573-million West Point project represents the single-largest investment ever made to protect the water quality of Puget Sound.

Metro broke ground on the ambitious project in May 1991. The project team faced innumerable challenges, including a court order to complete the project within four and one-half years—an extremely aggressive schedule.

Other challenges came from the more than 200 permit conditions imposed by local, state and federal agencies, including a requirement to limit the plant's "footprint" to 32 acres. Typically a project of West Point's magnitude

would require 75-80 acres. Engineers met this challenge, in part, by designing 20 percent of the plant underground.

Permit conditions also required stringent noise and odor controls: There could be no discernible noise or odor in adjacent public-access areas.

Limiting truck traffic through the neighboring Magnolia community presented another major challenge. To accommodate this condition, the project team built a temporary dock 300 feet into Puget Sound where barges could unload construction materials and load excavation spoils. Truck traffic was further reduced by locating a concrete batch plant on site. To limit car traffic in the Magnolia area, the project bused construction workers to and from the site each day.

Large construction efforts often present the unexpected, and the West Point project was no exception. In 1992, workers uncovered a Native American shell midden, or food-refuse area, which temporarily halted construction. Archaeologists estimated the midden to be 3,600 years old—the oldest find in the central Puget Sound basin.

Artifacts recovered from the find included mammal bones, fish bones and rock tools. After consulting with area tribes, Metro arranged temporary storage and exhibition of the artifacts at the University of Washington's Thomas Burke Museum. The handling of the archaeological find at West Point earned Metro the State Historical Preservation Office's Annual Award in 1994 for outstanding achievement in preservation planning.

Archaeologists sift through rock and soil at West Point where workers uncovered a Native American shell midden, or food refuse area, in early 1992 during construction of secondary-treatment facilities.



Despite the obstacles, Metro met the court-ordered timetable to begin secondary-treatment operations at West Point by Dec. 31, 1995.

"Building a secondary facility under a tight deadline while meeting the numerous permit conditions presented its challenges, especially considering we had to keep the existing primary plant operating," said Daryl Grigsby, Water Pollution Control director. "The West Point project, designed and constructed with the utmost sensitivity to the community and the surrounding environment, is among the greatest accomplishments achieved by the agency. It represents an important investment in our region's water quality."

Design features of the upgraded West Point plant include earthen berms and a 3,000-foot-long retaining wall along the plant's eastern boundary. These features, and the addition of 10,000 trees and 150,000 shrubs and smaller plants, will blend the facility into the nearby shoreline and hillside. Other features of the project include a new wetland and a 20-acre shoreline park, providing twice the shoreline area previously accessible to public.

Moving into the next century

Like other transit operators across the county, Metro has faced several challenges in recent years in providing the type of transportation services needed by its customers. An aging population, employment shifts, and population growth in suburban areas all contributed to the problem. And while transit ridership remained flat, King County faced some of the worst traffic jams in the nation.

To tackle these challenges, Metro, at the direction of the county executive, initiated a six-year plan to reconfigure its transit system. The plan was developed after more than a year's work with input from customers, potential customers, a citizen advisory group, public workshops, elected officials and city and county planners.

The new service plan focuses on connecting major Eastside destinations through fast, frequent service, providing improved suburb-to-suburb service without first traveling through downtown Seattle, and adding more service within suburban areas.

Innovative technologies and new equipment are being considered to achieve the plan's goals, including the use of small buses or vans that circulate in neighborhoods and

move people around the local community and bring riders to regional transit services at transit hubs.

The six-year plan targets 355,000 annual hours of new bus service by the year 2001. This service is being funded in part by a \$96 million savings achieved from the county executive's decision to purchase clean-diesel buses instead of buses fueled by natural gas and by dedicating more of the agency's annual revenue to operations instead of the capital budget.

"This will be the foundation for a better transportation system in King County, whether or not the region builds a rail system," Executive Gary Locke said at the plan's unveiling in June 1995. "We will see more vans, more small buses, more and better transfer hubs and more frequent service. We want to offer a variety of services to meet a variety of needs."

Whether a multi-county, high-capacity transportation system will ever be developed is still an unanswered question. In November 1988, King County residents said "yes" to an advisory ballot asking if rail planning should be accelerated. Metro began work, but the effort soon expanded with the formation in 1990 of the Joint Regional

*Metro
Milestone*

Dec. 16, 1993

**Last meeting of
the Metro
Council.**

Metro Milestone

Jan. 1, 1994

**Metro becomes
the King County
Department of
Metropolitan
Services.**

Policy Committee to oversee development of a rail-bus plan for King, Snohomish and Pierce counties. A complex proposal offering rail from Tacoma to Everett was developed. It had a long-term price of about \$13 billion, which was too much for elected officials to consider.

In 1993, using new state enabling legislation, the three counties voted to create a Regional Transit Authority to plan and operate rail and bus systems. The authority and its staff whittled away at the \$13 billion plan, reducing its scope and substituting light rail on shared rights-of-way for much of the heavy rail in the earlier proposal.

The cost came down to \$6.5 billion, and the measure was put on the ballot on March 14, 1995. But the proposal failed because it lacked support in Pierce and Snohomish counties.

After the defeat, the state Legislature authorized funding of the RTA through June 1996. The RTA board then began studying the various options available under state law including returning to the voters with the same proposal, revising the RTA district boundaries and modifying the proposal, developing a new proposal to submit to voters or taking no action. The board decided the no-action alternative was unacceptable because the traffic-congestion problem will not go away and will only get worse. Voters likely will have another chance to consider an RTA ballot proposal in 1996.



Ned Ahrens Photo

*King County Executive Gary
Locke learns about the North
Base body shop from shop lead
Bill Marshall during a visit in
February 1994.*

Metro functions merge into county government

Under terms of the voter-approved consolidation, Metro continued to function independently until January 1994, when the agency joined King County government as the Department of Metropolitan Services. The county executive and County Council then began discussions on how best to consolidate Metro's functions into a new regional government.

The decision came in September 1995 when the council approved a new structure for the county's executive branch, effective January 1996. Metro's Technical Services Department, which supported the agency's many construction projects over the years, was dissolved and its functions allocated to support transit and water pollution control areas. The Finance and Human Resources departments merged into reorganized county departments. Metro's Transit Department joined the county's roads division in a new Transportation Department. Metro's

Water Pollution Control Department consolidated with the county's surface water management and solid waste divisions into a new Natural Resources Department.

With the consolidated plan in place, the county executive and county council hope to create a high-performance, customer-focused government that delivers needed services to the public as cost efficiently as possible.

For some people, that may sound like a tall order. But for the 4,500 former Metro employees who are now part of King County government, the key to achieving the county's goals is simple: "Do better than promised" and anything is possible.

Metro executive directors

HAROLD E. MILLER

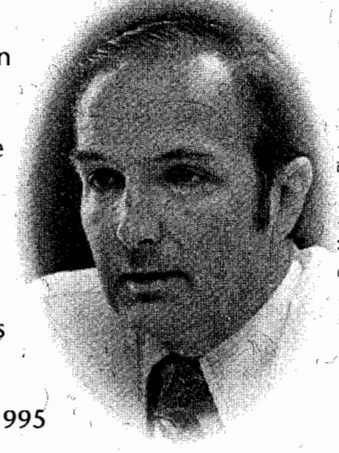
He became Metro's first executive director in February 1959. He served until he died at his desk June 3, 1964. Miller came to Seattle in 1956 to direct the engineering study that led to Metro's first comprehensive sewerage plan. The Renton Treatment Plant was dedicated in his honor in July 1965.



Seattle Times Photo

CHARLES V. (TOM) GIBBS

A University of Washington engineering graduate, Gibbs worked for the state Pollution Control Commission before joining Metro. After his resignation in 1974, Gibbs joined CH2M Hill, an engineering firm, and in 1995 was an executive vice president in charge of water-quality programs.



Roy Montgomery Photo

FRED E. LANGE

A veteran California engineer hired by Miller, he succeeded Miller and served until his retirement in March 1967. He died in 1984.



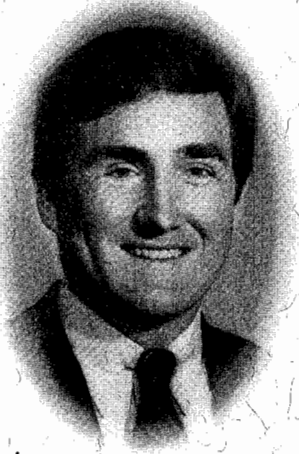
RICHARD PAGE

A former deputy mayor of Seattle, Page moved up from a Metro administrative staff position to succeed Gibbs. He was the first director who was not an engineer. He left Metro in 1976 to become administrator of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. Later he was director of the Washington, D.C., transit authority. In 1995 he was a Seattle businessman.



NEIL PETERSON

An administrator of the state Department of Social and Health Services, Peterson assumed the director's post in 1977. He resigned in 1984 on his marriage to Tracy Duiker, then Metro's finance director. He managed development of a rail transit system in Los Angeles after leaving Metro, and in 1995 was a businessman with interests in California and Seattle.



RICHARD K. SANDAAS

He was the only Metro Councilmember to become executive director. After leaving the council, he worked in Metro's technical services division and eventually became division director. He was appointed executive director on Gibbs' resignation. He exercised an early retirement option in 1993, and in 1995 was with CH2M Hill in Bellevue.



Ned Ahrens Photo

ALAN GIBBS

Also an administrator of the state Department of Social and Health Services, Gibbs succeeded Peterson. He resigned in February 1989, the result of a controversy over the proposed use of South African granite in the Seattle bus tunnel. In 1995 he was on the staff of Rutgers University in New York.



Ned Ahrens Photo

CAROLYN PURNELL

Head of Metro's legal staff, Purnell succeeded Sandaas. She encouraged program innovations to increase customer service and improve operating efficiencies and devoted much of her term to guiding Metro's merger with King County. For more than a year, Purnell served as one of three deputy county executives during the start-up of Executive Gary Locke's administration. She resigned in August 1995 as Metro executive director to go into private consulting.



Ned Ahrens Photo

Metro Milestone

March 14, 1995

**A Regional
Transit Authority
rail proposal is
defeated by
voters.**

Metro Milestone

Jan. 1, 1996

The Metropolitan
Services
Department
merges with
other King
County
departments.

Ned Ahrens Photo



*Metro's leadership team in 1994:
Front row, from left, Suzanne
Elshult, Human Resources
director; Carolyn Purnell,
executive director; Paul Toliver,
Transit director; Mary Peterson,
transit/transition manager. Back
row, from left, Daryl Grigsby,
Water Pollution Control director;
Mary Solomon, Executive
assistant; Jean Baker, Finance
director; Kevin Raymond, chief
counsel; Bonnie Mattson,
administrative coordinator; Carin
Weiss, deputy director; Mareatha
Counts, corporate communications
program manager; Vic Obias,
Technical Services director.*



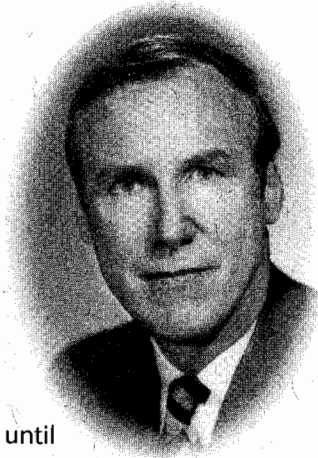
Izen Photography

With the consolidation of Metro and King County, a 13-member Metropolitan King County Council was formed as the legislative branch of county government. Sitting on the council in 1995 were, from left, Ron Sims, Bruce Laing, Jane Hague, Larry Phillips, Greg Nickels, Cynthia Sullivan, Kent Pullen (council chair), Louise Miller (vice chair), Brian Derdowski, Pete von Reichbauer, Christopher Vance, Maggi Pimia and Larry Gossett.

Metro Council chairs

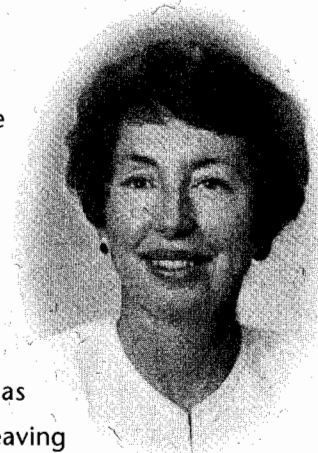
C. CAREY DONWORTH

A member of the citizens' group that planned and lobbied for the creation of Metro, he was elected first chair of the Metro Council Oct. 6, 1958. A labor relations consultant in private life and a Seattle resident, Donworth served until 1980. In 1995 he continued to work as a consultant.



PENNY PEABODY

Peabody defeated Zimmerman for chair of the council in 1990. A Mercer Island resident, she joined Metro in 1971 as a public information officer and served in a number of staff positions, including a term as acting executive director, leaving the staff in 1980. She resigned as chair in 1992 for health reasons, but has been active on a number of civic boards and in a family business.



Brant Photographers

DR. GARY ZIMMERMAN

A former Bellevue City councilmember and an educator, Zimmerman succeeded Donworth and chaired the council until 1990. In 1995 he was provost and chief executive officer of Antioch University in Seattle.



TOM KRAFT

A former Bellevue City councilmember, he became Metro's last chairman and served through the council's final meeting in December 1993. In 1995, he was a legislative aide to King County Councilmember Bruce Laing.



Ned Athens Photo

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Interviews and commenters

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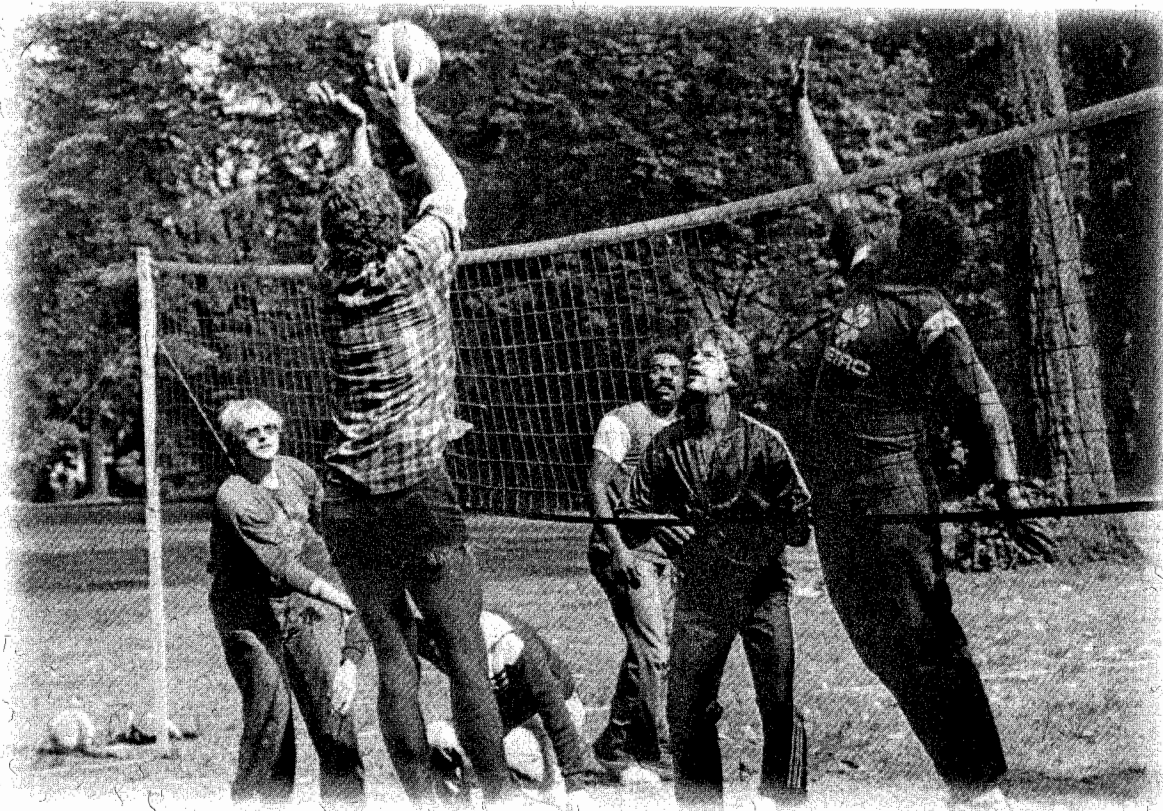
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Employees participate in a competitive game of volleyball at the annual Metro Employees Recreational Activities Association picnic at Lincoln Park.

Don't forget that Metro:

- ❖ **Promised to clean up Lake Washington in 10 years, but did it in nine.**
- ❖ **Ended sewage pollution in the Duwamish River and Elliott Bay and significantly reduced combined-sewer overflows throughout the Seattle area.**
- ❖ **Combined two failing transit systems into a robust, award-winning regional bus operation.**
- ❖ **Became noted for its skilled construction management and for pioneering use of value engineering.**
- ❖ **Built the extremely complex Renton effluent transfer system on time and under budget; the project included the deepest marine outfall in the world.**
- ❖ **Beat the odds and unexpected problems and completed the downtown bus tunnel on schedule, with some segments finished ahead of schedule.**
- ❖ **Faced enormous complications yet had the promised secondary-treatment system at West Point on line before a court-established deadline and within budget.**
- ❖ **Was directed by an unusual and effective federated Metro Council and was created, nurtured, encouraged and critiqued by thousands of caring citizens.**